



PARK EAST **R**EDEVELOPMENT PLAN

DOCUMENT TWO:

MASTER PLAN

PREPARED FOR:

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF
THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE

PREPARED BY:

- HNTB CORPORATION
- PLANNING & DESIGN
INSTITUTE, INC.

DATE ADOPTED BY RAGM: DEC. 15, 2003

DATE ADOPTED BY CITY: JUNE 15, 2004



Planning & Design Institute, Inc.

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Special thanks to the following people who dedicated a large portion of their time to this project while working for the City of Milwaukee:

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- Mariano A. Schifalacqua, former Department of Public Works Commissioner
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

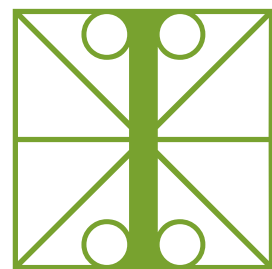
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HISTORY OF THE AREA

The Park East Freeway is a remnant of an abandoned 1960s plan to encircle downtown Milwaukee with freeways. (1.1) If the project would have been completed as planned, the existing freeway spur would have extended to the lake-front past Juneau Park and then connected to I-794 at the northern end of the Hoan Bridge. The western counterpart, the Park West Freeway, was envisioned to link the system to Highway 41, creating an east-west regional expressway.

After an extensive corridor was cleared for construction and only a mile segment of the Park East was completed, the project came to a halt during the mid-1970s in response to local opposition. The freeway spur, which extends from I-43 to North Milwaukee Street, was originally designed for large volumes of through traffic. Because the freeway system was not completed, the freeway spur remained over-designed. (1.2)

The land that was originally cleared for the incomplete section of the Park East Freeway remained vacant for years until the state removed it from the transportation corridor. The blockwide swath of vacant land east of the completed freeway section was returned to productive use with the creation of the East Pointe Neighborhood. (1.3) Today, the neighborhood is a vibrant urban community consisting of shops, townhomes, condominiums, and apartments.

The East Pointe Commons development was only the start of the downtown residential boom taking place in Milwaukee. Since that time, hundreds of new apartments and condominiums have been added as developers try to keep up with demand. To allow further downtown development, the

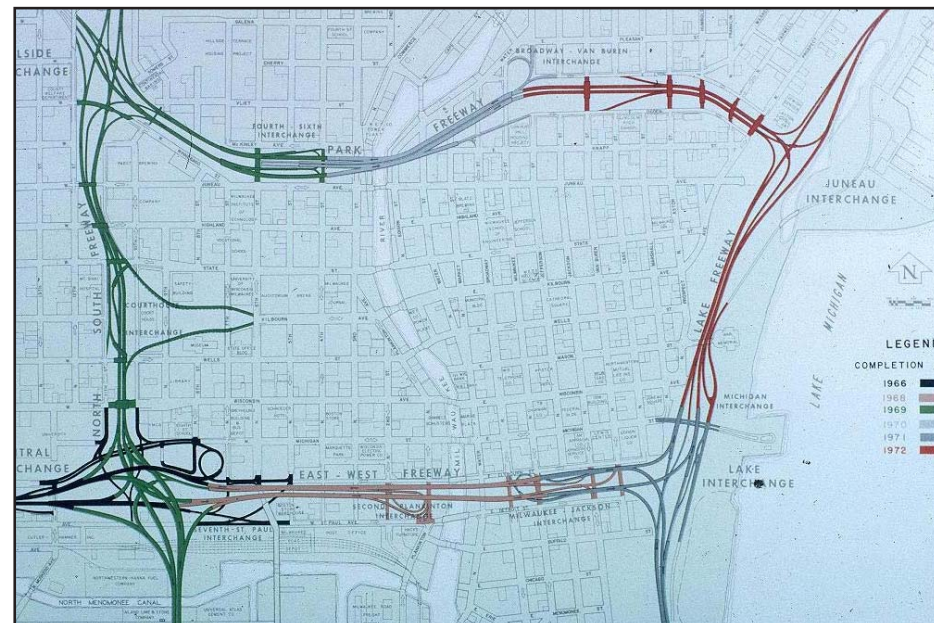
removal of the spur was included in the 1999 Interstate Construction Estimate Agreement that outlined a number of transportation projects. Former Gov. Tommy Thompson, former County Executive Tom Ament, and Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist approved the agreement.

In Spring 2002, removal of the Park East Freeway began. With public improvements completed, the elevated freeway spur will be replaced with an at-grade six-lane boulevard that is fully connected with the existing street grid. New block configurations will open up prime downtown property for redevelopment while increasing access to downtown and improving traffic flow. The demolition of the Park East Freeway spur will remove a physical barrier that currently separates downtown from the successful rejuvenations of historic Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Brady Street, and the Hillside and Carver Park housing developments.

DOWNTOWN PLAN

During the mid-1990s several highly visible projects were taking place in downtown Milwaukee. Wanting to maximize further development, business leaders, organizations and public officials partnered to create a plan that would reflect changing conditions and guide downtown development. (1.4)

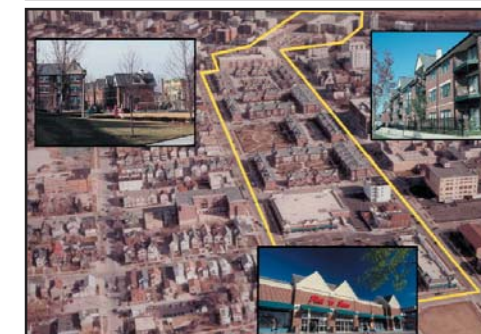
The collaborative planning effort among the City of Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Center District Board, and the Milwaukee Redevelopment Corporation included a high level of public participation. Thousands of participants gave their input into the future of downtown through stakeholder



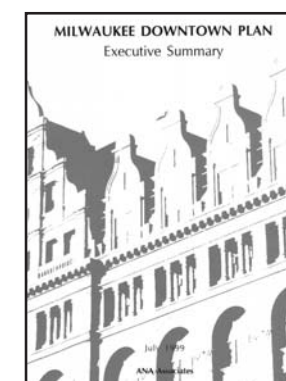
(1.1) The Park East Freeway is a remnant of an abandoned 1960s plan to encircle downtown Milwaukee with freeways.



(1.2) Since the freeway system wasn't completed, the freeway spur remained over-designed.



(1.3) The East Pointe Neighborhood occupies land originally cleared for the incomplete section of the Park East Freeway.



(1.4) The City of Milwaukee adopted the Milwaukee Downtown Plan in 1999 to guide future investments in the downtown.

interviews, mail surveys, visual preference surveys, and design workshops. The information was used to identify 13 catalytic projects that would stimulate development downtown.

Because of the underutilization of the freeway segment and potential for redevelopment of vacant land beneath and around the freeway spur, removal of the Park East Freeway was identified in the *Milwaukee Downtown Plan* as a key catalytic project for the continued investment of downtown Milwaukee. (1.5) The plan recommended a mixed-use district that reinstates the traditional street-grid system and identified objectives to address redevelopment throughout the Park East corridor, including:

- Promote residential and office mixed-use development;
- Extend the RiverWalk in front of the new mixed-use buildings;
- Enhance pedestrian connections across and around the river;
- Enhance the success of the Water Street entertainment venues; and
- Provide urban open space.

The Park East Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives established in the *Milwaukee Downtown Plan* and will serve as an implementation tool to guide redevelopment of the area.

RATIONALE FOR REMOVAL

The Park East Freeway was a blighting influence that devalued property and inhibited development on nearby parcels. (1.6) The debilitating effects of the elevated freeway spur relegated the dominant land use throughout the corridor to surface parking. (1.7) In an area where land resources are scarce and demand for quality office, residential, retail, and

other commercial uses is high, surface parking lots are not the highest and best use.

Originally designed for large volumes of regional traffic, actual traffic counts traveling on the Park East Freeway did not warrant an elevated structure. Daily vehicle counts were comparable to many surface streets such as Oklahoma and Forest Home Avenues, which carry approximately 22,000 vehicles per day. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission determined that the at-grade street improvements are capable of handling current and future traffic volumes.

The elevated freeway and street configurations that accompany it were physical barriers between downtown and neighborhoods to the north. Removing this barrier and reconnecting the street grid enhances local street access, as well as increases the development potential of the parcels previously encumbered by the freeway. (1.8) Together, these improvements connect downtown with historic Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Brewer's Hill, Brady Street, Schlitz Park, Commerce Street, and the Hillside and Carver Park housing developments.

The removal of the elevated freeway from Sixth Street to Jefferson Street, enables the redevelopment of over 60 acres of downtown land including 16 reclaimed acres that were directly beneath the elevated freeway. (1.9) The block configurations created by the reconfigured McKinley Avenue significantly increase the value and development potential of the land previously occupied by the freeway spur. The corresponding development will enhance the residential appeal of downtown and complement existing retail, entertainment, and commercial developments.

In addition, redevelopment of the corridor will increase downtown employment, business opportunities, and urban open space while significantly adding to the city and county property-tax bases. Overall, the Park East Redevelopment



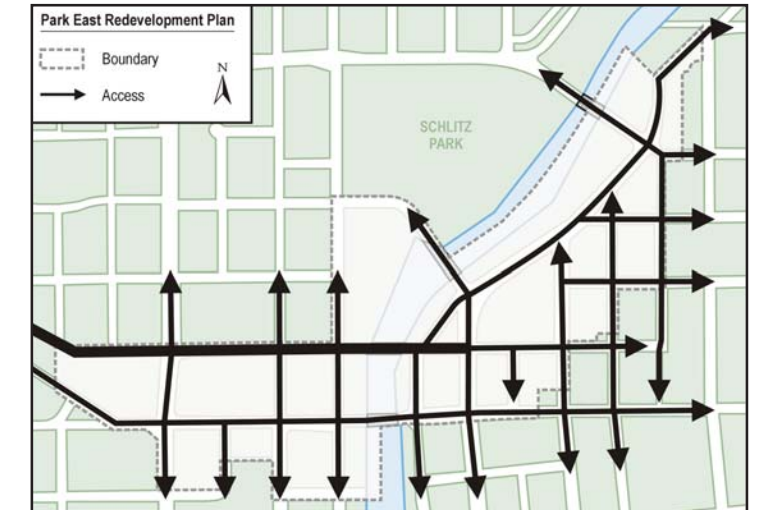
(1.5) Due to the underutilization of a transportation facility and the potential redevelopment of vacant land beneath and around the freeway spur, the *Milwaukee Downtown Plan* identifies removal of the Park East Freeway as a catalytic project for downtown Milwaukee.



(1.6) The elevated Park East Freeway was a blighting influence that has devalued property and inhibited development on nearby parcels.



(1.7) The debilitating effects of the elevated freeway spur relegated the dominant land use throughout the corridor to surface parking, which is not deemed the highest and best use for prime downtown and riverfront property.



(1.8) Removing the freeway spur increases access between downtown and nearby neighborhoods and increases the development potential of the land.



(1.9) Demolition of the Park East Freeway spur began in June 2002.

Project provides a balance between transportation needs and land use, while providing increased investment opportunities that will add value to downtown and the entire Milwaukee metropolitan area.

PLANNING PROCESS

In conjunction with the approval of the *Milwaukee Downtown Plan* in 1999, the City of Milwaukee entered into a cooperative agreement with the County and State to begin planning and engineering for the removal and replacement of the Park East Freeway spur. A planning team of state, county, and city staff as well as two consulting firms was created to guide the planning and engineering efforts.

In 2001, the City began preparing the Park East Redevelopment Plan, which would guide redevelopment in the corridor. The planning process generated consensus by actively involving participation by property owners, business leaders, residents, neighborhood organizations, and elected officials.

A Park East Web site was created and several newsletters were sent to more than 2,000 downtown residents, business owners, and other interested parties to provide updates about planning and construction activities. Multiple presentations and meetings with key stakeholders, property owners, neighborhood organizations, and governmental bodies were conducted to gather broad input.

As the planning team focused on preparing the draft Park East Redevelopment Plan, additional meetings with stakeholders were held to follow up on comments and suggestions made at previous meetings and to elicit verification of policies being drafted.

The final public review and adoption process included multiple presentations at City and County committee, board,

and council meetings, as well as a public open house that included a 16-by-9-foot model of the corridor. (1.10) The City and County conducted public hearings, and input was incorporated into the final plan before adoption.

The Park East Redevelopment Plan consists of three documents: Document 1: Renewal Plan; Document 2: Master Plan; and Document 3: Development Code.

GOALS

This Master Plan (Document Two) is the primary link to the Milwaukee Downtown Plan and the City's Comprehensive Plan. It provides the overall vision for development and describes the intended character of the districts and neighborhoods in the project area. The Master Plan reinstates the street grid using an urban design strategy based on streets, blocks and squares.

Together with the Renewal Plan (Document 1) and the Development Code (Document Three), this Master Plan is intended to guide future development of the area in a predictable manner that optimizes long-term public and private investments.



(1.10) City of Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist addresses attendees at the Park East Public Open House held at City Hall. Citizens were invited to the open house to meet with officials, review the Park East Redevelopment Plan, and view a 16-by-9-foot model of the Park East Freeway corridor.